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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 IO-13 TRSE-00 EUR-12 /109 W
----------004165 160924Z /10
R 151152Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7226
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USLO PEKING
USMISSION USUN
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1469

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, CH, SY, US, XF
SUBJ: PRC AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES ME PEACE PROCESS

SUMMARY: PRC AMBASSADOR HAS CALLED ON AMBASSADOR FOR THE FIRST SUBSTANTIVE EXCHANGE SINCE FORMER'S ARRIVAL OVER THREEYEARS AGO. WE DISCUSSED LATES US MOVES TO ASSIST ME PEACE PROCESS. PRC AMBASSADOR ASSERTED PEKING'S SUPPORT FOR SADAT ON CONDITION HE ADHERES IN NEGOTIATIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL AND NEED FOR PALESTINIANS TO SECURE THEIR LEGITIMATE NATIONAL RIGHTS. HE CRITICIZED SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO EXTEND HEGEMONY IN AREA AND WAS GUARDEDLY CRITICAL OF SOYRI-SOVIET RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRC AMBASSADOR SAO KE-CHIANG, ACCOMPANIED BY INTERPRETER, CALLED ON ME MARCH 14 FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON ME PEACE PROCESS. HE OPENED WITH QUESTIONSABOUT RECENT ATHERTON MISSION TO AREA. I DESCRIBED US DETERMINATION TO KEEP PEACE PROCESS MOVING AND CITED ATHERTON'S NOMINATION TO BE AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR ME NEGOTIATIONS AS EVIDENCE
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OF THIS. SAID FOCUS OF ATHERTON'S LATES MISSION HAD BEEN TO TRY TO NARROW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND CAIRO OVER DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR A PEACE SETTLMENT. EMPHASIZED US AIMS AT A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, A GOAL WHICH BOTH SADAT AND BEGIN SHARED.

2. TSAO OBSERVED THAT ONLY WASHINGTON COULD BRING BEGIN

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TO ADOPT MORE FLEXIBLE POSITIONS AND HALT SADAT'S
GROWING ISOLATION IN THE AREA. HE INQUIRED WHAT WE
EXPECTED ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER'S UPCOMING VISIT TO
WASHINGTON TO ACHIEVE. REPLIED IN GENERAL TERMS
THAT WE WISHED TO MOVE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE
TOWARD SECURING AGREED TAXT FOR A DECLARATION WHICH WOULD
ADD ELEMENT TO OTHER PRINCIPLES OF UNRES 242, ONE DEALING
WITH THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN ALL ITS ASPECTS. WE
ALSO WOULD BE MAKING CLEAR OUR POSITION THAT WITHDRAWAL
PRINCIPLE IN 242 MUST APPLY TO ALL FRONTS.

3. ASKED ABOUT PEKING'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SADAT'S INITIATIVES,
TSAO RECALLED VISIT OF AN EGYPTIAN EMISSARY TO PEKING.
EGYPTIAN HAD BEEN TOLD THAT CHINA WOULD SUPPORT SADAT
IN HIS INITIATIVES AS LONG AS HE UPHELD IN NEGOTIATIONS
THE PRINCIPLES OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES AND THE NEED TO SECURE THE LEGITIMATE
NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS. PAKING ALSO TOLD
THE EGYPTIAN EMISSARY THAT PRC APPROVED SADAT'S STAND
AGAINST SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO EXERT HEGEMONY OVER EGYPT.
IN THIS CONNECTION, TSAO REFERRED TO RECENT PRC STATEMENTS
CRITICAL OF SOVIET POLICIES IN THE ME AND THE HORN OF AFRICA
AND OBSERVED THAT PRC AND US POLICY COINCIDED ON MANY POINTS.

4. TSAO PROBED SEVERAL TIMES ABOUT DEPTH OF US COMMITMENT
TO A COMPRESHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. I REITERATED THAT THIS WAS
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OUR FIRM FOAL AND THAT OF SADAT AS WELL. SAID OUR PRESENT FOCUS
ON THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WAS ATTEMPT TO HELP ELABORATE
FRAMEWORK FOR NEGOTIATIONS WHICH EVENTUALLY WOULD BRING IN ALL
PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT. WE DO NOT CONSIDER A
PARTIAL SETTLMENT WOULD OFFER A DURABLE SOLUTION. ALSO NOTED
THAT, SYRIAN MEDIA TO THE CONTRYARY, WE WERE NOT TRYING CREATE
ANTI-SYRIAN AXIS IN AREA.

5. TSAO CRITICIZED LATES SOVIET EFFORTS TO EXTEND MOSCOW'S
CONTROL OVER ARAB STATES THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF TRIPOLI AND
ALGIERS CONFERENCES. ASKED DIRECTLY IF HE CONSIDERED THE
SOVIETS HAD SUCCEEDED IN GAINING GREATER CONTROL OVER
DAMASCUS, TSAO PAUSED AND REPLIED DELIBERATELY THAT HE
BELIEVED THAT SYRIA WAS TODAY "CLOSER" TO THE SOVIETS.
HE RESISTED MAKING ANY MORE DIRECT COMMENT. (COMMENT:
HE OBVIOUSLY UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT CHALLENGING PUBLIC SYRIAN
ASSERTIONS THAT IT HAS PRESEVED TOTAL FREEDOM OF ACTION
IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY.)

6. ASKED ABOUT US-SYRIAN RELATIONS SINCE SADAT VISIT TO
JERUSALEM, I REPLIED THAT WE HAD NO BILATERAL PROBLEMS.
WE LATELY DISAGREED OVER SADAT'S INITIATIVES AND THIS

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HAD CREATED SOME TENSION. ADDED THAT I FELT, NONETHELESS, THE SYRIANS UNDERSTOOD THE CONSISTENCY OF AMERICAN POLICY IN SUPPORTING DIRECT ARAB-ISRAELI CONTACTS. ASSURED TSAO THAT WE WERE ABOUT TO DISCUSS OUR DIFFERENCES FRANKLY IN WELCOME CONTRAST TO THE TOTAL LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND WASHINGTON PRIOR TO 1974.

7 ON TAKING LEAVE, TSAO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN MAINTAINING CONTACT AND HAVING FUTURE EXCHANGES REPLIED I WOULD WELCOME OPPORTUNITY AT ANY TIME.

8. COMMENT: TSAO AND I PRESENT CREDENTIALS TO ASSAD ON SAME DAY IN SEPTEMBER 1974. THIS WAS HIS FIRST OVERTURE FOR A SUBSTANTIVE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. CAN ONLY

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PRESUME IT WAS MADE ON DIRECTION FROM PEKING.
MURPHY

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